

Governor Matt Mead Inaugural Address

January 3, 2011

My thanks to all of you who on this cold day came to give us such a warm welcome.

Governor and Judge Freudenthal, thank you for being here today, and thank you for your commitment to the state of Wyoming. In the last eight years, both of you have demonstrated on a daily basis your love for this state, and every citizen of Wyoming owes you a big thank you.

Governor Geringer, Governor Sullivan thank you for being here and for the time you have given me to help me to prepare for the job at hand.

Thank you also and congratulations, to those who will work with me in the coming years on behalf of the State of Wyoming. Max Maxfield, Joe Meyer, Cynthia Cloud and Cindy Hill—I look forward to working with each of you.

I thank and welcome our wonderful congressional delegation, Senator Enzi, Senator Barrasso and Congressman Lummis. Thank you for the hard work you do for us in D.C. day in and day out.

To Senate President Anderson, House Speaker Buchanan and to all the legislators I thank you for your work and look forward to the upcoming session. Wyoming is truly blessed to have a citizen legislature comprised of people who are willing to spend time away from their family and businesses, for no pay, to do the business of the state every year.

To Chief Justice Kite and members of the state and federal judiciary, your presence honors us.

All three branches of government –executive, legislative and judicial-are represented here today. And that is only fitting since the three branches form the sturdy legs on which our democracy rests.

To the employees of the State of Wyoming, you have my sincere appreciation for your service to the state and, prospectively, for undertaking with me the work that lies ahead.

I also welcome the fourth grade class from Lusk, Wyoming. These fourth graders are studying Wyoming history, and have traveled here to get a first hand look at the transition process. You Lusk students are not only learning Wyoming history you are part of it. To other students all across Wyoming, who are here thanks to streaming video, I am pleased to welcome today, I call on each of you to prepare yourselves today to become Wyoming leaders tomorrow.

And, obviously, thank you Carol. The love of my life, my partner in every adventure and Wyoming's next first lady.

And Mary. And Pete. I could not be prouder of you. And I want you both to know, that no title is more important to me or brings more pride and joy to my heart than, the title of "Dad".

And to my Dad, my Mom – you taught the lessons of life that no text book or professor could teach: honesty, hard work, individual responsibility, getting back on after being thrown, and loving your family. These life lessons will serve me well in the years to come.

And to the citizens of Wyoming: I thank you for the opportunity to work for you for these next four years. I ran for this office as a republican; but no governor of Wyoming should append his party affiliation to the office. I pledge to serve all of you, republicans, democrats and independents alike—not as Wyoming's *Republican* governor, but simply and proudly as *Wyoming's* governor.

Starting today, to paraphrase the words of a famous poet, I take the road less traveled. Since Wyoming became a state in 1890, there have been just 31 Governors before me. What an honor it is for me to take the oath of office as the 32nd Governor of the State of Wyoming!

And thanks to the foresight and the thrift of those who have traveled this road and occupied the office before me and the long line of able legislators who have managed the purse strings, Wyoming finds itself today in a position any other state would envy. We have a balanced budget by law and by our fiscally conservative nature. We have great agriculture resources, we have great tourism. We have natural resources that, if managed well, can contribute to Wyoming's economy well into the future.

But we have far more than money and natural resources. We have clean air and water; we have open and unspoiled spaces that call to the resident and tourist alike. We sometimes struggle with issues of management, but we are blessed with a diverse population of wildlife that continues to enthrall and enrich those of us who live here.

From Worland to Wamsutter, and from Cody to Cheyenne, all across the state of Wyoming, we lucky few who live here wake up in the morning to the sun rising above the plains to our east and end our day watching it set in the ramparts of the Wind River Range.

There may not be many of us who live in the long stretches between The Big Horn Basin and Yellowstone National Park, or between Hulett and Savery, but here's who we are:

We still know how to split wood, jump-start a car, and negotiate our way through a herd of cattle moving up the road. We are scientists, educators, mechanics and leaders in innovation. We are owners of small business. We are self-reliant. We have grit. We are still the kind of people envisioned by the founding fathers who, inspired by sacred notions of liberty and self-determination, created a nation of citizens that govern themselves.

We take care of each other: From the neighbor helping at a branding, to the small town doctors and nurses, to those who care for our children and victims of crime to the volunteers who deliver holiday meals. And as we move into the future, taking care of each other is a commitment that will grow ever more important. The issue of affordable health care is one that will be addressed. The question is whether we in Wyoming address it in a fashion that fits our needs or whether we accept a design crafted by input from 435 representative and 100 senators—only three of whom are from Wyoming. Of necessity, the Federal health care bill is an enormous compromise that Washington would have us believe will work as well in Wyoming as it does in California or Alabama. A compromise solution may be the best congress could do—it is not the best we can do.

We want Wyoming driven solutions to health care, to managing our wildlife, our water, our resources and our land. We recognize that the best solutions for

Wyoming come from Wyoming. We don't borrow against a future causing unsustainable debt because we recognize every pasture has limited grass and a finite carrying capacity. We will not graze, let alone overgraze, our grandchildren's pastures. We are proudly part of the United States and now is the time, for the benefit of our great country for Wyoming to lead by example. And we can lead.

We are ever more ready for the future. The University of Wyoming has its highest ever enrollment. Our community colleges are strong. The legislature has invested in the future with the Hathaway scholarships.

And through the efforts of many far-sighted people—politicians, citizens, and private industry alike—we have a school of energy resources, we are building a supercomputer, creating a test bed for the clean energy of coal gasification, and exploring miles below the earth's surface to find a safe and sustainable way to store carbon.

When I campaigned for this office, I explained that I thought Wyoming's small population shouldn't be looked at as a disadvantage—with the character of the people who live here it should be seen as an opportunity-because without question our citizens are Wyoming's greatest resource. Without you, our natural and other resources could not be developed. Without you, our western heritage and way of life could not endure. With you, Wyoming's future is both bright and secure. But we have work to do. I do not accept that average is good enough. From education, to energy development to jobs and the economy, we should strive to put Wyoming first.

With our small population and the strength of our citizens we must be bold, knowing with all the advantages we have, we can get things done; we can innovate.

We can attract new industries and diversify our economy through improved technology and connectivity.

We can plan today for the water needs of the future.

We can help our young people get an education that is second to none.

We can communicate more effectively; problem solve more collaboratively; and work neighbor with neighbor towards leaving our children and grandchildren with the same clean air and clean water and open spaces we enjoy—and a healthy economy that makes that enjoyment possible.

To do all of these things, the small population of Wyoming needs to know their elected representatives. The citizens in Wyoming expect and deserve access to their government. And my door will be open.

Many years ago, in 1963, my Grandfather stood in front of the people of Wyoming and gave his inaugural address. Among other things, he said:

“...in the long run, the greatest contribution government can make is to provide the opportunity which will encourage individual initiative and effort. Government cannot plan except as individuals dream. It cannot project, except as the probing mind of man peers in the unknown. It cannot produce except as individual men labor.”

The wisdom of his words shapes my beliefs. A state cannot be judged solely on how much it has in its savings account—it must develop and maintain the infrastructure to create the opportunities that will encourage individual initiative and effort. At the same time it must fight excessive regulation that hinders individual initiative. It must provide a predictable regulatory scheme for investment and growth. Wyoming prospers as our educators and students and individuals dream—and we have to plan into the future to make those dreams possible. Together all of us peer today into an unknown future; one that will present us with challenges and delight us with opportunities. I pledge to you today my heart and soul in working with you, putting Wyoming first, to make our future as bright as can be.

A bright future does not happen without some amazing sacrifices. So today it is most important to me to say thank you to the absent. Those Wyoming citizens who cannot be here today but, by their efforts, give us the opportunity because they are in Afghanistan or Iraq or another troubled part of the world, doing for us what brave men and women have done for the United States for 234 years. Some of Wyoming’s soldiers have already sacrificed all, and our hearts and thanks belong to their

families. Some are there still, holding a rifle or driving in a convoy, thinking about their families and their homes, and our prayers for a safe return belong with them until they are back again in Wyoming.

God bless those soldiers, God Bless the United States of America, and God Bless Wyoming.

Thank you.